IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A data reading method of reading variable length-coded data, the method comprising:

a first code word reading step of sequentially reading a series of code words partitioned by a <u>resynchronization marker</u> ~~plurality of resynchronization markers~~; [[and]]

a resynchronization marker detecting step of detecting a next resynchronization marker<u>,</u> <u>positioned between a current code word and a next code word at a time of starting decode</u> <u>operation with respect to the current code word, read out in the first code word reading step</u> ~~before a reading position in the first code word reading step reaches the next resynchronization~~ ~~marker~~<u>; and</u>

<u>a decoding step of carrying out a decoding process with respect to the current code word</u> <u>after detecting the next resynchronization marker.</u>

Claim 2 (Original): The data reading method according to claim 1, further comprising:

a second code word reading step of sequentially reading the series of code words based on the next resynchronization marker detected in the resynchronization marker detecting step.

Claim 3 (Original): The data reading method according to claim 1, wherein

the data is configured to be read in both forward and reverse directions,

the method further comprises a third code word reading step of reading the series of code

words in an opposite direction to a reading direction in the first code word reading step, and

in the third code word reading step, the series of code words are sequentially read based

on the resynchronization marker detected in the resynchronization marker detecting step.

Claim 4 (Original): The data reading method according to claim 1, further comprising:

an error identifying step of identifying an error in a range of data read in the first code

word reading step.

Claim 5 (Original): The data reading method according to claim 4, wherein

in the error identifying step, the error identification is made when the code word read in

the first code word reading step is undecodable.

Claim 6 (Original): The data reading method according to claim 4, further comprising:

a bit number information reading step of reading information about a number of bits

between resynchronization markers; and

a counting step of counting the number of bits of a code word read in the first code word

reading step, wherein

in the error identifying step, the error identification is made based on the information read

in the bit number information reading step and the number of bits counted in the counting step.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended): A data reading apparatus for reading variable length-coded data, comprising:

a first code word reading device for sequentially reading a series of code words partitioned by a <u>resynchronization marker</u> ~~plurality of resynchronization markers~~; [[and]]

a resynchronization marker detecting device for detecting a next resynchronization marker<u>, positioned between a current code word and a next code word at a time of starting decode operation with respect to the current code word, read out by the first code word reading device</u> ~~before a reading position by the first code word reading device reaches the next resynchronization marker;~~ <u>and</u>

<u>a decoding device for decoding with respect to the current code word after detecting the next resynchronization marker.</u>

Claim 8 (Original): The data reading apparatus according to claim 7, further comprising:

a second code word reading device that sequentially reads the series of code words based on the next resynchronization marker detected by the resynchronization marker detecting device.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): A <u>recording medium where a</u> program for executing a data reading method of reading variable length-coded data <u>is computer-readably recorded,</u> wherein the ~~programs~~ <u>program</u> makes a computer <u>perform</u> ~~function as~~:

a first code word reading step of sequentially reading a series of code words partitioned by a <u>resynchronization marker</u> ~~plurality of resynchronization markers~~; [[and]]

a resynchronization marker detecting step of detecting a next resynchronization marker, positioned between a current code word and a next code word at a time of starting decode operation with respect to the current code word, read out in the first code word reading step before a reading position in the first code word reading step reaches the next resynchronization marker; and

a decoding step of carrying out a decoding process with respect to the current code word after detecting the next resynchronization marker.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): The recording medium where the program according to claim 9 is computer-readably recorded, wherein the program makes the computer further function as perform:

a second code word reading step of sequentially reading the series of code words based on the next resynchronization marker detected in the resynchronization marker detecting step.